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Siberian Journalist Jailed Over 5 Years for 'Fake' War Reporting

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Mikhail Afanasyev. **Social media**

A Russian court has sentenced Siberian journalist Mikhail Afanasyev to more than 5 years in prison for spreading "fake news" about Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Afanasyev, the chief editor of the republic of Khakasia's Novyi Fokus outlet, was among the first to be detained on Russia's wartime censorship laws in the spring of 2022.

Investigators accused Afanasyev of publishing "inaccurate information" in an April 2022 report on 11 Khakasia riot police officers refusing to be deployed in Ukraine.

The Abakan City Court in the Khakasian capital found Afanasyev guilty and sentenced him to 5.5 years in a general security penal colony.

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Prosecutors had requested a six-year prison sentence for Afanasyev, 47, who denies the charges against him.

The court also banned Afanasyev from performing journalistic work for 2.5 years after his release.

Afanasyev's defense plans to appeal the sentence, said Nikolai Rybakov, the chairman of Russia's liberal Yabloko party who attended Thursday's court hearing.

After President Vladimir Putin sent troops to Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022, Russia introduced prison terms of up to 15 years for spreading "false" information about its military.

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